

Message Text

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51
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OSAF WASHDC PRIORITY

OASD/ISA PRIORITY

USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

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AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

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TAGS: BEXP, MASS, NATO , NO

SUBJ: AIRCRAFT REPLACEMENT: MEDIA REPORTING

1. ALL MAJOR MEDIA INCLUDING LABOR PARTY DAILY ARBEIDERBLADET

REPORTED MARCH 21-22 THAT NORWAY WILL BUY

THE F-16, EVEN IF THE OTHER THREE COUNTRIES IN THE

AIRCRAFT PURCHASE CONSORTIUM DO NOT.NEWS OF THE

NORWEGIAN DECISION WAS APPARENTLY LEAKED SHORTLY

AFTER THE NORWEGIAN PARLIAMENT WAS OFFICIALLY INFORMED

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OF THE DECISION TO BUY THE F-16.

2. FOLLOWING ARE PERTINENT EXCERPTS FROM NORWAY'S
LARGEST DAILY AFTENPOSTEN:

3. NORWAY WILL BUY THE ADVANCED AMERICAN FIGHTER AIR-CRAFT F-16 FROM GENERAL DYNAMICS, NO MATTER WHAT TYPE OF PLANE BELGIUM, NETHERLANDS, AND DENMARK DECIDE ON. ACCORDING TO WHAT AFTENPOSTEN HAS LEARNED, THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THE F-16 IS BY FAR THE AIRCRAFT BEST SUITED FOR NORWAY. THE DECISION ON THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE WAS REVEALED TO THE STORTING'S EXTENDED FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE YESTERDAY MORNING. THE GOVERNMENT PRESUMES THAT DENMARK AND THE NETHERLANDS WILL ALSO BUY THE F-16, WHILE BELGIUM IS SEEN AS LESS CERTAIN.

4. AFTENPOSTEN REPORTED THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT PRIME MINISTER TRYGVE BRATTELI HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE HIMSELF TO BRING THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE ISSUE TO A FINAL DECISION. HE DID THIS IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THOSE OPPOSED TO THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE TRIED TO GET NORWAY'S DECISION POSTPONED. THE PRIME MINISTER'S INITIATIVE IS BELIEVED TO BE AN EFFORT TO AVOID ANY DOUBTS ABOUT OUR DEFENSES AND OUR WILL TO UPHOLD OUR NATO OBLIGATIONS.

5. NEWS OF THE PURCHASE WAS RECEIVED WITH SATISFACTION IN ALL POLITICAL PARTIES EXCEPT THE SOCIALIST LEFT PARTY. THE AIRCRAFT PURCHASE ISSUE IS EXPECTED TO BE DEALT WITH BY THE STORTING BEFORE ITS SUMMER RECESS.

6. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE LEAK, DEFENSE MINISTER FOSTERVOLL REFUSED TO CONFIRM IT. THE ISSUE IS BEING HANDLED IN THE NORMAL WAY, HE SAID, AND NORWAY'S DECISION WILL NOT BE REVEALED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BEFORE THE OTHER THREE COUNTRIES INVOLVED ARE INFORMED AT THE APRIL 3 MEETING IN BRUSSELS.

7. AFTENPOSTEN FURTHER REPORTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS RESERVED THE RIGHT TO RESCIND ITS DECISION
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IF TECHNICAL OR POLITICAL CONDITIONS CHANGE SIGNIFICANTLY, THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW IS THAT NORWAY CAN PAY BACK THE AIRCRAFT BUILDER FOR ITS EXPENSES INCURRED IN MAKING THE F-16, SUITABLE FOR NORWAY, IF NORWAY DECIDES TO BACK OUT.
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